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The last 20 years has seen a 60% boom in Western Australia's workforce, says the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

Growth in the state's labour force, growing by almost 400,000 to exceed one million in 2004-05, is important for sustaining economic growth in Western Australia and the ABS has detailed how this boom occurred.

Factors that have contributed to the state's labour force growth over the past two decades include:

- A doubling in the number of women employed (from about 229,000 in 1984-85 to 445,000 in 2004-05). Over half of women in WA are now participating in the labour force (58% in 2004-05 compared to 48% in 1984-85).
- The number of part-time workers has more than doubled (from 118,000 in 1984-85 to 297,000 in 2004-05). Almost one-third of the state's employment is now part time. Also, over the last 12 years, casual employment in Western Australia has risen at a rate more than three times that of permanent employment.
- The number of people aged 40 years and over in Western Australia's labour force has more than doubled (from 222,000 to 512,000) resulting in almost half the state's labour force being aged 40 years and over in 2004-05.

Much of the growth has been influenced by broader population (including overseas migration) and economic growth, but greater workforce participation (particularly women), more flexible working arrangements in the form of part-time and casual work, as well as an increasing number of mature aged workers staying in the labour force have also contributed strongly.

This issue of **Western Australian Statistical Indicators** also includes a feature article examining the health and well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Western Australia.

More details are in **Western Australian Statistical Indicators** (cat. no. 1367.5).

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